2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
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563 775 he must feel himself strong enough to beat down the fire of passions and remain steadfast to the end, for a lutwet, a man who has put his hand to the plough and turns back again, exposes himself to infinitely greater danger towards his next existence than he who has remained throughout in the world. The monastery is a house of refuge not to be lightly sought, and, sad to say, even it is not open to the outcast.

775 181 761 This doctrine of kan also accounts for the equanimity and callousness with which Buddhists view human misery and the taking of human life, notwithstanding the law which forbids the killing of even the smallest insect. They recognise apathetically the working out of inexorable destiny, and watch a man drowning in the river with undisturbed tranquillity, for they are not called upon or even justified in stirring a hand to prevent it. You cannot combat manifest fate.

564 But the outcast may not in any case enter the monastery, not even as a scholar. Even that last chance is withheld from him. He is the connecting link with the state of animals, the highest state of punishment. He is considered no better than an animal in thought; he meets with less toleration in actual life. Were he bedizened to the eyes with costly silks and priceless jewellery no girl would look at him. His wealth is of no use. He is not allowed to build a pagoda, or even to supply fresh-water pots on a wayside stand. The monk would refuse his alms; the starving free-man beggar would scorn his bounty. They will no doubt gradually disappear under British rule, but there will be those who will regret it. They may have to work hard for their living.

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
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764 by iron hoops and rattan lashings. Up in Mandalay some
772 are very much larger. These are let off at the funeral pile
389 from a distance of forty or fifty yards, the largest being mounted on go-carts, and many others guided by a rope fastened to the pya-that, the rocket sliding along by means of twisted cane loops. The great majority fail to have any other effect than making a great splutter and poisoning the air. A few refuse to budge at all; others topple off their carts and fizzle erratically on the grass. A pôngyi byan in the old days was frequently attended with loss of life. Some one, at any rate, of the bigger rockets was sure to fly off at a tangent and plunge into the crowd, where its weight, to say nothing of its fiery belchings, found one or more victims. Even now it is only by the strictest police regulations and a rigorous maintaining of order among the spectators, and system in the pyrotechnists, that like catastrophes do not happen. At last some lucky dôn plunges right into the inflammable materials piled below the bier, and in a few minutes the flames are leaping high above the topmost pinnacle of the spire. Roof after roof falls, setting fire to the offerings placed round the basement. The joints of bamboo explode with a noise like a pistol shot; the crowd cheer each separate occurrence, and when finally the central spire falls with a hiss, a shout rises from the multitude which suggests anything but death and pious observance. But here
●[761] in the manôtthapyi all is changeful, sad, and unreal, and one more death brings but nearer to the final rest of Ne'ban.

When the last smouldering embers have cooled, the monastic brethren search for any pieces of bones that may remain, and these are carefully gathered up and buried somewhere near the pagoda. Sometimes, in the case of a particularly saintly man, they are pounded down, mixed into a paste with thitsi, and moulded into an image of the Buddha, which is stored up in the monastery. The custom followed in other Buddhist countries of erecting a shrine over the dead is, in accordance with the teachings of Shin Gautama, an honour but rarely accorded in Burma. In the Shan States they are commoner, but are rarely anything more elaborate than a stucco-covered block of bricks, about three feet high and pointed at the top.

of their families. The bride and groom are each handed a spray of flowers from the offering bowls and they make obeisance to the guardian spirits of their respective households. With a second spray they make obeisance to their parents and elders. Then a small tray containing fruit and rice is placed before them. The lay elder places a spoonful of this food first to the bridegroom's, then to the bride's lips. As he does this he makes a statement to the effect that this is the auspicious meal and that he hopes blessings may flow from it. 794 585

At this point, a happy and fruitfully married couple from among the oldest people in the community step forward to marry the couple. The left hand of the man is placed on top of the right hand of the girl. Water is poured on their hands thus joined and a silk scarf tied over them as the elderly couple recite words to the effect that they are now united. A chanter arises and intones a song of praise for long life. The contents of the bowl of puffed rice and money are scattered among the audience, and everyone scrambles for them. Now the bride and groom rise and are led to the bridal chamber, across the doorway of which is stretched a golden chain. After the bride has entered, anyone who wishes to do so tries to barricade the doorway and demand money of the groom. He is obliged to pay everyone who makes such demands. This money is known as 'stone money,' from the old custom, still practiced sometimes, of stoning the house of a couple on their wedding night until the bridegroom arises and pays them to desist. This behavior, the taunts and demands that are expressed, has an implied bawdiness about it. Once the couple have entered the bridal chamber, others may go in to inspect it. When all have left the chamber there is a general feast. Usually the feast in Tadagale partakes of the nature of a tea party, since a full scale feast is expensive. Each guest receives a symbolic gift, usually a cigar or a fan.

Old Age. Old age is the period after one's children are grown, the 'third age' of life. Women are definitely regarded as old after the menopause. The Burmese terms for 'old lady' and 'old man' are synonymous with grandparent terms, both in address and reference. Sometimes 'old mother' is used instead of 'old lady.' Long life is considered a great blessing and an indication of merit earned. Long life is prayed for and old age greatly idealized. 386 601 761

The ideal aged person is one who has successfully reared a family, has grandchildren, and a certain amount of material wealth. The aged are expected to be retiring and unobstrusive in their behavior. They should not go out visiting very much; they should eat less and avoid appearing too well dressed or jeweled when attending religious observances. 388

An attitude of resignation characterizes the outlook of the aged person. It is unheard of that old people should work. A possible exception would be a village headman, who, it is felt, should be a person of long experience. When aged people live with their children they assume the role of teachers of their grandchildren. Most of the time of elderly people is spent in activities centering around the pagodas and monasteries, organizing of religious festivals, and raising funds for the monks and charities. They often take leading roles in such activities. 687

The elderly members of a household arise early to see that the rice is cooked for the daily offering to the monks, and to insure that the household altar is properly looked after. It is preferable for them to arise before dawn, for to do so is considered very meritorious.

16:Fielding Hall G-3 (1885-1890) 1898 AP1 Burma
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ing, seated under a fig-tree. She came up to the Buddha, and told him of her losses, and how she had no one left; and she demanded of the Buddha that he should restore to her those that she had lost. And the Buddha had great compassion upon her, and tried to console her.

'All die,' he said; 'it comes to everyone, king and peasant, animal and man. Only through many deaths can we obtain the Great Peace. All this sorrow,' he said, 'is of the earth. All this is passion which we must get rid of, and forget before we reach heaven. Be comforted, my daughter, and turn to the holy life. All suffer as you do. It is part of our very existence here, sorrow and trouble without any end.'

But she would not be comforted, but demanded her dead of the Buddha. Then, because he saw it was no use talking to her, that her ears were deaf with grief, and her eyes blinded with tears, he said to her that he would restore to her those who were dead.

'You must go,' he said, 'my daughter, and get some mustard-seed, a pinch of mustard-seed, and I can bring back their lives. Only you must get this seed from the garden of him near whom death has never come. Get this, and all will be well.'

So the woman went forth with a light heart. It was so simple, only a pinch of mustard-seed, and mustard grew in every garden. She would get the seed and be back very quickly, and then the Lord Buddha would give her back those she loved who had died. She clothed herself again and tied up her hair, and went cheerfully and asked at the first

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539 house, 'Give me a pinch of mustard-seed,' and it was
771 given readily. So with her treasure in her hand she
761 was going forth back to the Buddha full of delight, when she remembered.

'Has ever anyone died in your household?' she asked, looking round wistfully.

The man answered 'Yes,' that death had been with them but recently. Who could this woman be, he thought, to ask such a question? And the woman went forth, the seed dropping from her careless fingers, for it was of no value. So she would try again and again, but it was always the same. Death had taken his tribute from all. Father or mother, son or brother, daughter or wife, there was always a gap somewhere, a vacant place beside the meal. From house to house throughout the city she went, till at last the new hope faded away, and she learned from the world, what she had not believed from the Buddha, that death and life are one.

[772] So she returned, and she became a nun, poor soul! taking on her the two hundred and twenty-seven vows, which are so hard to keep that nowadays nuns keep but five of them.[1]

779 This is the teaching of the Buddha, that death is
761 inevitable; this is the consolation he offers, that all men must know death; no one can escape death;

[772] [1] These five vows are:

1. Not to take life.
2. To be honest.
3. To tell the truth.
4. To abstain from intoxicants.
5. Chastity.

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no one can escape the sorrow of the death of those whom he loves. Death, he says, and life are one; not antagonistic, but the same; and the only way to escape from one is to escape from the other too. Only in the Great Peace, when we have found refuge from the passion and tumult of life, shall we find the place where death cannot come. Life and death are one.

This is the teaching of the Buddha, repeated over and over again to his disciples when they sorrowed for the death of Thariputra, when they were in despair at the swift-approaching end of the great teacher himself. Hear what he says to Ananda, the beloved disciple, who is mourning over Thariputra.

'Ananda,' he said, 'often and often have I sought to bring shelter to your soul from the misery caused by such grief as this. There are two things alone that can separate us from father and mother, from brother and sister, from all those who are most cherished by us, and those two things are distance and death. Think not that I, though the Buddha, have not felt all this even as any other of you; was I not alone when I was seeking for wisdom in the wilderness?

'And yet what would I have gained by wailing and lamenting either for myself or for others? Would it have brought to me any solace from my loneliness? would it have been any help to those whom I had left? There is nothing that can happen to us, however terrible, however miserable, that can justify tears and lamentations and make them aught but a weakness.'

And so, we are told, in this way the Buddha

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779 761 soothed the affliction of Ananda, and filled his soul with consolation—the consolation of resignation.

For there is no other consolation possible but this, resignation to the inevitable, the conviction of the uselessness of sorrow, the vanity and selfishness of grief.

There is no meeting again with the dead. Nowhere in the recurring centuries shall we meet again those whom we have loved, whom we love, who seem to us to be parts of our very soul. That which survives of us, the part which is incarnated again and again, until it be fit for heaven, has nothing to do with love and hate.

Even if in the whirlpool of life our paths should cross again the paths of those whom we have loved, we are never told that we shall know them again and love them.

A friend of mine has just lost his mother, and he is very much distressed. He must have been very fond of her, for although he has a wife and children, and is happy in his family, he is in great sorrow. He proposes even to build a pagoda over her remains, a testimony of respect which in strict Buddhism is reserved to saints. He has been telling me about this, and how he is trying to get a sacred relic to put in the pagoda, and I asked him if he never hoped again to meet the soul of his mother on earth or in heaven, and he answered:

'No. It is very hard, but so are many things, and they have to be borne. Far better it is to face the truth than to escape by a pleasant falsehood. There is a Burmese proverb that tells us that all

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the world is one vast burial-ground; there are dead men everywhere.' 779 761

'One of our great men has said the same,' I answered.

He was not surprised.

'As it is true,' he said, 'I suppose all great men would see it.'

Thus there is no escape, no loophole for a delusive hope, only the cultivation of the courage of sorrow.

There are never any exceptions to the laws of the Buddha. If a law is a law, that is the end of it. Just as we know of no exceptions to the law of gravitation, so there are no exceptions to the law of death. 779 761 772

But although this may seem to be a religion of despair, it is not really so. This sorrow to which there is no relief is the selfishness of sorrow, the grief for our own loneliness; for of sorrow, of fear, of pity for the dead, there is no need. We know that in time all will be well with them. We know that, though there may be before them vast periods of suffering, yet that they will all at last be in Nebhan with us. And if we shall not know them there, still we shall know that they are there, all of them—not one will be wanting. Purified from the lust of life, white souls steeped in the Great Peace, all living things will attain rest at last. 779 761

There is this remarkable fact in Buddhism, that nowhere is any fear expressed of death itself, nowhere any apprehension of what may happen to the dead. It is the sorrow of separation, the terror of

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death to the survivors, that is always dwelt upon with compassion, and the agony of which it is sought to soothe.

That the dying man himself should require strengthening to face the King of Terrors is hardly ever mentioned. It seems to be taken for granted that men should have courage in themselves to take leave of life becomingly, without undue fears. Buddhism is the way to show us the escape from the miseries of life, not to give us hope in the hour of death.

It is true that to all Orientals death is a less fearful thing than it is to us. I do not know what may be the cause of this, courage certainly has little to do with it; but it is certain that the purely physical fear of death, that horror and utter revulsion that seizes the majority of us at the idea of death, is absent from most Orientals. And yet this cannot explain it all. For fear of death, though less, is still there, is still a strong influence upon their lives, and it would seem that no religion which ignored this great fact could become a great living religion.

Religion is made for man, to fit his necessities, not man for religion, and yet the faith of Buddhism is not concerned with death.

Consider our faith, how much of its teaching consists of how to avoid the fear of death, how much of its consolation is for the death-bed. How we are taught all our lives that we should live so as not to fear death; how we have priests and sacraments to soothe the dying man, and give him hope and courage, and how the crown and summit of our creed is that

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we should die easily. And consider that in Buddhism all this is absolutely wanting. Buddhism is a creed of life, of conduct; death is the end of that life, that is all.

We have all seen death. We have all of us watched those who, near and dear to us, go away out of our ken. There is no need for me to recall the last hours of those of our faith, to bring up again the fading eye and waning breath, the messages of hope we search for in our Scriptures to give hope to him who is going, the assurances of religion, the cross held before the dying eyes.

Many men, we are told, turn to religion at the last after a life of wickedness, and a man may do so even at the eleventh hour and be saved.

That is part of our belief; that is the strongest part of our belief; and that is the hope that all fervent Christians have, that those they love may be saved even at the end.

I think it may truly be said that our Western creeds are all directed at the hour of death, as the great and final test of that creed.

And now think of Buddhism; it is a creed of life. In life you must win your way to salvation by urgent effort, by suffering, by endurance. On your death-bed you can do nothing. If you have done well, then it is well; if ill, then you must in future life try again and again till you succeed. A life is not washed, a soul is not made fit for the dwelling of eternity, in a moment.

Repentance to a Buddhist is but the opening of the eyes to see the path to righteousness; it has no virtue in itself. To have seen that we are sinners

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779 is but the first step to cleansing our sin; in itself it
761 cannot purify.

As well ask a robber of the poor to repent, and suppose thereby that those who have suffered from his guilt are compensated for the evil done to them by his repentance, as to ask a Buddhist to believe that a sinner can at the last moment make good to his own soul all the injuries caused to that soul by the wickedness of his life.

Or suppose a man who has destroyed his constitution by excess to be by the very fact of acknowledging that excess restored to health.

The Buddhist will not have that at all. A man is what he makes himself; and that making is a matter of terrible effort, of unceasing endeavour towards the right, of constant suppression of sin, till sin be at last dead within him. If a man has lived a wicked life, he dies a wicked man, and no wicked man can obtain the perfect rest of the sinless dead. Heaven is shut to him. But if heaven is shut it is not shut for ever; if hell may perhaps open to him it is only for a time, only till he is purified and washed from the stain of his sins; and then he can begin again, and have another chance to win heaven. If there is no immediate heaven there is no eternal hell, and in due time all will reach heaven; all will have learnt, through suffering, the wisdom the Buddha has shown to us, that only by a just life can men reach the Great Peace even as he did.

So you see that if Buddhism has none of the consolation for the dying man that Christianity holds out, in the hope of heaven, so it has none of the

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threats and terrors of our faith. There is no fear of an angry Judge—of a Judge who is angry.

And yet when I came to think over the matter, it seemed to me that surely there must be something to calm him in the face of death. If Buddhism does not furnish this consolation, he must go elsewhere for it. And I was not satisfied, because I could find nothing in the sacred books about a man's death, that therefore the creed of the people had ignored it. A living creed must, I was sure, provide for this somehow.

So I went to a friend of mine, a Burman magistrate, and I asked him:

'When a man is dying, what does he try to think of? What do you say to comfort him that his last moments may be peace? The monks do not come, I know.'

'The monks!' he said, shaking his head; 'what could they do?'

I did not know.

'Can you do anything,' I asked, 'to cheer him? Do you speak to him of what may happen after death, of hopes of another life?'

'No one can tell,' said my friend, 'what will happen after death. It depends on a man's life, if he has done good or evil, what his next existence will be, whether he will go a step nearer to the Peace. When the man is dying no monks will come, truly; but an old man, an old friend, father, perhaps, or an elder of the village, and he will talk to the dying man. He will say, "Think of your good deeds; think of all that you have done well in this life. Think of your good deeds."'

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'What is the use of that?' I asked. 'Suppose you think of your good deeds, what then? Will that bring peace?'

And the Burman seemed to think that it would.

'Nothing,' he said, 'was so calming to a man's soul as to think of even one deed he had done well in his life.'

Think of the man dying. The little house built of bamboo and thatch, with an outer veranda, where the friends are sitting, and the inner room, behind a wall of bamboo matting, where the man is lying. A pot of flowers is standing on a shelf on one side, and a few cloths are hung here and there beneath the brown rafters. The sun comes in through little chinks in roof and wall, making curious lights in the semi-darkness of the room, and it is very hot.

From outside come the noises of the village, cries of children playing, grunts of cattle, voices of men and women clearly heard through the still clear air of the afternoon. There is a woman pounding rice near by with a steady thud, thud of the lever, and there is a clink of a loom where a girl is weaving ceaselessly. All these sounds come into the house as if there were no walls at all, but they are unheeded from long custom.

The man lies on a low bed with a fine mat spread under him for bedding. His wife, his grown-up children, his sister, his brother are about him, for the time is short, and death comes very quickly in the East. They talk to him kindly and lovingly, but they read to him no sacred books; they give him no messages from the world to which he is bound; they whisper to him no hopes of heaven.

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He is tortured with no fears of everlasting hell. Yet life is sweet and death is bitter, and it is hard to go; and as he tosses to and fro in his fever there comes in to him an old friend, the headman of the village perhaps, with a white muslin fillet bound about his kind old head, and he sits beside the dying man and speaks to him.

'Remember,' he says slowly and clearly, 'all those things that you have done well. Think of your good deeds.'

And as the sick man turns wearily, trying to move his thoughts as he is bidden, trying to direct the wheels of memory, the old man helps him to remember.

'Think,' he says, 'of your good deeds, of how you have given charity to the monks, of how you have fed the poor. Remember how you worked and saved to build the little rest-house in the forest where the traveller stays and finds water for his thirst. All these are pleasant things, and men will always be grateful to you. Remember your brother, how you helped him in his need, how you fed him and went security for him till he was able again to secure his own living. You did well to him, surely that is a pleasant thing.'

I do not think it difficult to see how the sick man's face will lighten, how his eyes will brighten at the thoughts that come to him at the old man's words. And he goes on:

'Remember when the squall came up the river and the boat upset when you were crossing here; how it seemed as if no man could live alone in such waves, and yet how you clung to and saved the boy

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779 761 who was with you, swimming through the water that splashed over your head and very nearly drowned you. The boy's father and mother have never forgotten that, and they are even now mourning without in the veranda. It is all due to you that their lives have not been full of misery and despair. Remember their faces when you brought their little son to them saved from death in the great river. Surely that is a pleasant thing. Remember your wife who is now with you; how you have loved her and cherished her, and kept faithful to her before all the world. You have been a good husband to her, and you have honoured her. She loves you, and you have loved her all your long life together. Surely that is a pleasant thing.'

Yes, surely these are pleasant things to have with one at the last. Surely a man will die easier with such memories as these before his eyes, with love in those about him, and the calm of good deeds in his dying heart. If it be a different way of soothing a man's end to those which other nations use, is it the worse for that?

Think of your good deeds. It seems a new idea to me that in doing well in our life we are making for ourselves a pleasant death, because of the memory of those things. And if we have none? or if evil so outnumbered the good deeds as to hide and overwhelm them, what then? His death will be terrible indeed if he cannot in all his days remember one good deed that he has done.

'All a man's life comes before him at the hour of death,' said my informant; 'all, from the earliest memory to the latest breath. Like a whole land-

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scape called by a flash of lightning out of the dark night. It is all there, every bit of it, good and evil, pleasure and pain, sin and righteousness.'

A man cannot escape from his life even in death. In our acts of to-day we are determining what our death will be; if we have lived well, we shall die well; and if not, then not. As a man lives so shall he die, is the teaching of Buddhism as of other creeds.

So what Buddhism has to offer to the dying believer is this, that if he live according to its tenets he will die happily, and that in the life that he will next enter upon he will be less and less troubled by sin, less and less wedded to the lust of life, until sometime, far away, he shall gain the great Deliverance. He shall have perfect Peace, perfect rest, perfect happiness, he and his, in that heaven where his teacher went before him long ago.

And if we should say that this Deliverance from life, this Great Peace, is Death, what matter, if it be indeed Peace?

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CHAPTER XXII

THE POTTER'S WHEEL

'Life is like a great whirlpool wherein we are dashed to and fro by our passions.'—*Saying of the Buddha.*

779 IT is a hard teaching, this of the Buddha about
● 761 death. It is a teaching that may appeal to the
reason, but not to the soul. That when life goes
182 out, this thing which we call 'I' goes out with it, and that love and remembrance are dead for ever.

It is so hard a teaching that in its purity the people cannot believe it. They accept it, but they have added on to it a belief which changes the whole form of it, a belief that is the outcome of that weakness of humanity which insists that death is not and cannot be all.

Though to the strict Buddhist death is the end of all worldly passion, to the Burmese villager that is not so. He cannot grasp, he cannot endure that it should be so, and he has made for himself out of Buddhism a belief that is opposed to all Buddhism in this matter.

775 He believes in the transmigration of souls, in the survival of the 'I.' The teaching that what survives

776 of the villagers. The head-nat, the guardian of the village, replies
753 with accusations that "the whole village has forgotten me", boasts of
688 his powers to punish and is finally mollified. In Rangoon there are
672 professional nat-givers who parade the streets with a cart bearing the
782 image of "the conqueror of the salty waters" (special nat of entrepre-
[463] neurs). For a few annas he will make offerings to the nat and relcive the busy townspeople of this task.

776 The arrangement is a mutual one where the people enjoy freedom
782 from oppressions in return for certain concessions. This phenomenon closely parallels the traditional relationship between the rulers and the ruled in Burma. In a real sense the nat concept serves the function of allowing the Burmese a sense of control over catastrophic forces which do not fall into any other system (as secular, political,
[177] personal relationships, cosmology.). It is this system of controls that the western scientific system most immediately competes with. The administrative and entrepreneur class of Burmese especially in Rangoon say they "Do not believe"in nats. But it is usual for most individuals no matter what their western background to apply to nats in cases of ill fortune "just in case".

775 THAYEH (Ghosts) generally are a group of supernatural spirits closely related to nats in their origins but with a different set of properties. These are "recently" deceased individuals whose crimes and sins while on earth or manner of death condemn them to an eternity of wandering and mischief-making. Actually, each person becomes a ghost at death but is ordinarily released from earth at the moment of the interment of the corpse for judgement in heaven. Those who die of
● [761] "raw death" become ghosts. These include: death in childbirth, by wild animals (especially tigers), instant deaths by dahs as in warfare, or by hanging. In Maung Maung Than's village a prominent ghost is U Me Gyi (Mr. Blacky) a very sinful fellow who lived 50 or 60 years ago in the village. His complexion is quite black and horribly distorted. He inhabits a banyan tree and specializes in causing infant illness. Offerings of rice at the tree pacifies him. Ghosts are forces for evil only - evil of the more irritating and less important kind.
751 Older people wear red and white coloured strings about their necks as a protection against ghost evils. It is very common to wear a LET-PWET

23: Brant & Mi Mi Khaing E, I-5 (1949-1950)1951
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888 To the Burmese, long life is a great blessing and an indication of merit earned. Long life is prayed for and old age greatly idealized.

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An attitude of resignation characterizes the outlook of the aged person in Burmese society. It is unheard of that aged people should work: a possible ex- [622] ception is the village headman, who, it is felt, should be a person of long experience. When aged people live with their children they assume the role of teachers of their grandchildren. Most of the time of elderly people is spent in activities centering around the pagodas and monasteries, organizing of religious festivals, and raising funds for the monks and charities. In fact, they take leading roles in such activities.

The elderly members of the household arise early to see that rice is cooked for the daily offering to the monks and to insure that the household altar is properly looked after. It is preferable for them to arise before dawn, for to do so is considered very meritorious.

[784] Certain of the taboos that apply to younger people, mostly those connected with death, do not apply to the aged.

●761 *Death and Funeral Observances.* To the Burmese, the decline of the human body is part of the inevitable course of nature. When this occurs the soul must [775] leave. The butterfly is the symbol of life: when a person dies, "the butterfly leaves his body."

763 When death approaches, valuables, such as jewelry, are removed from the person and the death-bed, because people are reluctant to use anything with which a person dies. These things are given to the monastery. A relative chants as the person is dying, to fix his mind upon the truths of Buddhism and to divert it from worldly goods and ties of kinship.

764 As soon as death has occurred, everyone present cries and wails. Before rigor mortis sets in, relatives bathe the corpse, using a new water pot for the purpose and pouring the water over the body from foot to head, the opposite direction from that practiced by the living. If the water pot must be refilled at all, this [801] must be done an odd number of times. The pot is then put outside the house, upside down, and anyone outside the family of the deceased may take it. Then

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

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423. PROPITIATING THE LOCAL NATS (NAKKAZA).

A nat is propitiated by offerings at a shrine, almost always in miniature. Only fruit, flowers, and music are offered by Buddhists. A special genius is assigned to the dwelling—*ein-dwin Min Magayi nat*, in whose little shrine a cocoa-nut is offered. The nut is replaced as the water dries up, which it is assumed the *nat* has drunk. There are *nats* who preside over countries, Û Mindyi and Û Mindyâ for Burma, Û Yindyi for Pegu, Bôdaw and his sons for Thatôn, and other local *nats*. These *nats* are propitiated by such offerings as a crown, or by standing guard before their images, upon undertaking a journey, entering on a race or other contest. The five *nats* of the firmament have a special cult associated with that of the eight planets, with which the Buddha and eight *yahánda* are mixed up. The local *nats* are most commonly propitiated in *pyatho* (December), the harvest month. The visitations of malign spirits are attributed to what the Burmans call unripe (*asein*) deaths. Such are deaths from lightning-stroke, accidents of all sorts, child-bed, cholera, and whatever is violent and sudden. The normal re-incarnation of the *karma* of such is immature; they haunt localities as ghosts (*tasi*), and seek the bodies of the living for hosts, thereby causing sickness. Slaughter in battle accounts for a plague of this kind, and the one plague entails another.

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Pilgrimages to the great shrines are made in the dry months, especially at times of full moon. The most sacred shrine of the Peninsula and the perennial resort of pilgrims is the *zedi* on the site of the ancient Mun village Dagôn, renamed Yangôn (Rangoon). The legend declares that the original founders of the shrine deposited eight hairs

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424. SHRINE OF THE HOUSE-GENIUS—MIN MAGAYI NAT.

29: Slater M-4 (no date) 1951 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

771 It is necessary, therefore, at the outset of our inquiry to correct this impression.

A writer on Comparative Religion is dependent on the experts from different fields, and Dr Bouquet is only repeating what a number of commentators on Burmese religion have been saying for the past fifty years. But if we examine their statements we find that many of them merely reflect, without further evidence or critical examination, an opinion expressed by a European official in a Census Report of 1891. This opinion was emphasised by another Census official, Mr. C. C. Lowis, ten years later:

"The Burman has added to his Animism just so much Buddhism as suits him and with infantile inconsequence draws solace from each in turn. I know of no better definition of the religion of the great bulk of the people ... than that given by Mr Eales in his 1891 Census Report, 'a thin veneer of philosophy laid over the main structure of Shamanistic belief.' The facts are here exactly expressed. Animism supplies the solid constituents that hold the faith together, Buddhism the superficial polish. Far be it from me to underrate the value of that philosophic veneer. It has done all that ... polish can do to smooth, to beautify and to brighten, but to the end of time it will never be anything more than a polish. In the hour of great heart-searchings it is profitless as the Apostle's sounding brass. It is then that the Burman falls back upon his primaeval beliefs. Let but the veneer be scratched, the crude animism that lurks below must out. Let but his inmost vital depths be touched, the Burman stands forth an Animist confessed."[4]

771 782 [563] [177] Mr Lowis' opinion is based on a critical examination of the situation, and it cannot be lightly gainsaid. He also refers to the prevailing Animistic beliefs of the surrounding hill tribes who still infiltrate into the plains of Burma, a factor which encourages the survival of primitive ideas among the Burmese themselves. This survival is not to be denied. It is impossible to live in Burma without coming across evidences of Animism, sooner or later — the coconut, surmounted by a red cloth, still hung in most Burmese households as a *Nat* offering; the 'bus driver halting his vehicle to run across the road and place a little bouquet of flowers at the foot of some tree which is the shrine of a local spirit. Most of these practices are innocent. Occasionally, however, one has a grim reminder of more fateful beliefs. Burmese students once explained to me, reluctantly, [761] that they had desisted in their efforts to save a drowning boy because it was obvious that he had been seized by the *Nat* of the lake.

[4] *Census of India Report*, Vol. XII, (Burma, 1901), Part 1, by C. C. Lowis, chap. III, p. 36.